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San Francisco Valley State College began laying the groundwork for the admission of some 225 educationally and economically disadvantaged students a year ago. The first step was to undo previous guidance, which had guided males into industrial arts areas and females into bedmaking. A new approach was needed by guidance personnel. Through investigation and interviews the following points were discovered: (1) many blacks were sensitive to their skin color, (2) the students felt short-changed educationally, (3) their home environment was felt to be a handicap, and (4) there was overwhelming peer pressure to achieve above their levels. Taking this information, the following criteria were drawn up as necessities for an effective counselor: (1) he must be acceptant, (2) he must be able to approach students, (3) he should be available, (4) he should contact parents and maintain this contact, (5) he should be a straightforward, honest, and if necessary blunt advisor, (6) he should be aware of black causes, (7) he should have participated in a training program, (8) he should have knowledge in his advisee's stated major field. (Author/KJ)

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COLLEGE GUIDANCE ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

by

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There are, undoubtedly, as many philosophies concerning college guidance work as there are guidance centers in this nation. Certain institutions and areas concern themselves with the academic processes, others emphasize vocational direction and still others are primarily concerned with the personal and social adjustment of their students. While it would be difficult to justify one approach to the exclusion of the others, this paper will present one counselors impression of one approach to the guidance of disadvantaged college youth.

Approximately one year ago, the administration, faculty and student body of San Fernando Valley State College began laying the groundwork for the admission of some 225 educationally and economically disadvantaged students. Spurred on by a handful of minority students on the campus and encouraged by relatively recent federal fundings, active recruitment of students from the ghettos and barrios moved into high gear. Being neophytes in the area, and working under the considerable pressure of the times, planning for the future of these students was sometimes given less thought than simply "getting them in".

Faculty members were solicited to provide a close contact within the college. The desire was to obtain sympathetic, sensitive faculty who would provide for a less traumatic transition to the college life. This was not altogether successful. Again, lack of experience in organizing such a project resulted in a somewhat unresponsive reply

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from the faculty. The students were there. 225 young people who had defied great odds and arrived on a college campus. Investigation told us many of these students had neither been encouraged nor allowed to take any courses that would have been considered preparation for college work. The majority of the males had been guided into the industrial arts area and the females taught how to make beds - the better to serve as maids and breadwinners in the Los Angeles area. Our first order of business, therefore, was to undo the guidance they had received thus far. We had a mandate to reverse the direction being taken by a group of 225 minority students.

Realizing there were many methods which might prove successful in this endeavor, the critical point was in selecting the one which would work for the particular student and counselor. Where heretofore guidance personnel at the college level had been able to apply knowledge acquired in their preparatory courses as well as draw upon their own past personal experience in the college situation, we were now faced with an entirely different set of circumstances - the EOP. Because it was new and because it was different, it required a truly unique approach to the guidance program. Where before we professed a belief in the uniqueness of an individual, we were now faced with the uniqueness of the individual within a particularly unique group. The white, anglo-saxon, protestant values and goals were no longer appropriate.

With this environment in which to work, it was necessary for those interested in counseling and guidance of these students to search for methods that would be more effective, both for the present

situation and in the future. Investigation and interviews with members of the program provided some valuable information concerning their self-views. Many of the Blacks felt quite sensitive about their color and, in fact, one girl told me she felt almost paranoid over the color of her skin. (the diagnosis and terminology were hers). Another facet of their handicap in our modern-day schools was the perception they held of their preparation. To a man, the students felt they had been shortchanged in their education thus far. A cursory examination ofmonies expended in the ghetto schools compared with some of the wealthier suburban institutions, readily confirmed this belief. Several of the students interviewed felt their home environment was a considerable handicap. Frequently fatherless, the ghetto home does not provide the motivation, stability or support found more often in white, middle-class areas. The predominant pressure mentioned by the EOP students was the overwhelming peer influence on their lives. They felt the pressure of the group to perform above what was perceived as their level was their strongest motivating force. Coupled with the aforementioned problems were the standard freshman anxieties over the unfamiliar, questioning of one's ability, loneliness and dating and sexual problems.

With this information concerning the wants and needs of the students, a guidance program is being developed to best serve this group of individuals. Again drawing upon the students for information because they appeared to be the most legitimate source, the following criteria were drawn up as necesseties for an effective EOP counselor.

FIRST - He must be acceptant. This must be exhibited not only by his thoughts but even more importantly, by his actions. The student

must know he has an open mind within the first few meetings or any chance of rapport and growth will be severely hampered.

SECOND - Closely related to the first point is the ability to approach students. Any students. These kids felt very keenly about the necessity of this trait. The counselor must not be phony or the least condescending in his manner. The treatment of the students as equals, or even at times superiors, was deemed an important quality.

THIRD - He should be available. Perhaps this means increasing office hours, or better yet, meeting the student at his dormitory lounge or coffee shop. The students felt a weekly meeting was an absolute necessity, at least in the initial stages, in order to quickly become familiar with one another.

FOURTH - They felt the counselor should contact the parents and maintain this contact. They believed the influence of their parents would be much more positive if the parents were kept informed as to the procedures, expectations and customs of the school as well as knowing at least one faculty member cared for and exhibited an interest in their child.

FIFTH - All of the students expressed a desire for a straight-forward, honest, and, if necessary, blunt advisor. They resented, as they had every right to, the white, establishment professor who was constantly jiving.

SIXTH - Many of the students also expressed a desire for an advisor who was aware of the Black and Brown causes. This in no way implied the advisor had to believe in or advocate the cause. Many of the EOP students question the causes being espoused by their fellow students. They merely were desirous of an understanding professor.

SEVENTH - Although they would not require it, many of the students felt some sort of training period would be desirable for all advisors. This might include the previous item concerning the Causes of minority groups, motivational factors, unique problems of the minorities and so on.

EIGHTH - Finally, the students wished for an advisor who had some knowledge in their stated major field. Aside from the obvious help they might receive, they felt this would provide another bond in establishing a truly meaningful relationship.

Before effective communication and hence effective counseling can take place with minority students from severely deprived backgrounds, there will undoubtedly be a great deal of trial and a certain amount of error. It is my feeling however, that the guidance and counseling of these students can be a most rewarding experience for the advisor. In assisting in the growth and intellectual development of the EOP student there is bound to occur a certain amount of growth and intellectual development on the part of the counselor. And that after all, is what this business is all about.